

VZCZCXRO4620
OO RUEHBI
DE RUEHLM #0017/01 0041050
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 041050Z JAN 08
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7436
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0619
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7607
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5787
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4208
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1693
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4215
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3311
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8209
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5780
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0501
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2526
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000017

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/04/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: GSL BLAMES CFA ABROGATION ON LTTE;
PROMISES POLITICAL SOLUTION

REF: A. COLOMBO 0015

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 0007

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James R. Moore, for reasons 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. On January 3, the GSL submitted to Norwegian Ambassador Tore Hattrem formal notification, dated January 2, of its intent to withdraw from the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA). Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama briefed Co-Chair Ambassadors on the evening of January 3 and the broader diplomatic corps on January 4 on its decision to terminate the CFA. He said the LTTE's repeated violations of the CFA had rendered the agreement meaningless and argued that the CFA is not a requisite of talks between the government and LTTE. His statement emphasized the GSL's commitment to a political solution to the conflict. Bogollagama expressed appreciation for the role of the Co-Chairs in the peace process and hope that they would remain engaged. The GSL will likely continue to pursue a dual track on resolving the conflict--pushing ahead militarily, while proclaiming its interest in a political settlement. It is unclear, however, if the GSL has sufficient political space to support proposals that would be acceptable to the majority of Tamils. End Summary.

GSL Submits Notification of Withdrawal

[1](#)2. (U) On January 3, the GSL submitted formal notification to Norwegian Ambassador Tore Hattrem, dated January 2, of its intent to withdraw from the Cease Fire Agreement. The CFA, along with the Status of Mission Agreement authorizing the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, will officially expire on January 16.

Foreign Minister Explains GSL Decision

[1](#)3. (C) Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama briefed Co-Chair Ambassadors on the evening of January 3 on the GSL's

decision to withdraw from the CFA. He addressed the broader diplomatic corps on January 4. Bogollagama argued that the CFA was flawed from its inception because it was entered into "without proper consultation by the government of the day" and because it "alienated the democratic Tamil political forces." He said the LTTE's repeated violations of the CFA had rendered the agreement meaningless. His January 4 statement provided a litany of LTTE violations, including incidents of military aggression, assassinations, and efforts to rearm and reorganize. He listed the assassination of Member of Parliament T. Maheswaran on January 1 as an example of LTTE aggression. (Note: The LTTE's involvement has not been established and an investigation has not yet been conducted. When DCM questioned the drafter of Bogollagama's statement about the reference to Maheswaran, who is widely believed to have been killed by an operative of the anti-LTTE Eelam People's Democratic Party (ref b), he replied that the GSL has an intelligence report indicating LTTE responsibility. End Note) Bogollagama maintained that the GSL was compelled to engage in military operations against the LTTE after the civilian population was threatened by water cuts in Mavilaru. He contended that GSL protests to the Norwegian government about LTTE violations went unheeded.

GSL Promises a Political Solution

¶4. (C) Bogollagama argued that the CFA is not a requisite of talks between the government and LTTE, and noted that talks had taken place on several occasions prior to the signing of the CFA. His statement emphasized the GSL's commitment to a political solution to the conflict. He added

COLOMBO 00000017 002 OF 002

that termination of the CFA "gives us broader space to pursue this goal in a manner that involves all sections of the Sri Lankan polity which remained sidelined due to the CFA." He told the Co-Chair Ambassadors that the government would reveal its plans for achieving such a solution in the near future.

GSL Hopes Co-Chairs Remain Engaged

¶5. (C) In his January 3 briefing, Bogollagama expressed appreciation for the role of the Co-Chairs in the peace process and thanked the Co-Chairs for being a "partner" to the GSL. He said termination of the CFA should not change the role of the Co-Chairs, and said he wanted "the Co-Chairs to be more active and engaged in the political process." He praised the efforts of Norway as peace facilitator, but did not specify whether Norway would be asked to continue in this role.

Co-Chairs Agree on Implications

¶6. (C) Co-Chair Ambassadors met earlier on January 3 to discuss the abrogation of the CFA. All parties agreed that the abrogation reflects the GSL's belief that it can seriously weaken the LTTE militarily and that, therefore, the CFA is no longer relevant. It was generally agreed that the GSL made the announcement at this time in return for the JVP's support on the budget vote last month. Despite the group's concern, members agreed that the Co-Chairs should remain engaged, both bilaterally and collectively, including moving forward with programs in the East.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: The GSL's abrogation of the CFA, while not surprising, is a significant step that almost certainly foretells increased military operations in the North. We expect the GSL to continue to pursue a dual track on resolving the conflict--pushing ahead militarily, while at the same time proclaiming its commitment to a political solution. We note, however, that one of the JVP's demands

for supporting the budget (ref a) was the dissolution of the All Parties Representative Committee (APRC), making it possible that future progress on a political solution would be conducted under a different framework. We do not, however, expect the government to disband the APRC. The Foreign Minister's comment that the CFA sidelined sections of the Sri Lankan polity fails to acknowledge the intent or existence of the APRC. Bogollagama's statement provided no specifics on what a political proposal might look like or when it might be tabled. We also caution that the government has little political room to maneuver, particularly following the budget vote. Beholden to the JVP and its Sinhalese nationalist constituency, it is unclear whether the GSL will be able to offer a political solution that would be acceptable to the majority of Tamils. We will continue to press the government, publicly and privately, to come up with a credible devolution proposal.

BLAKE